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Media Contacts:

Taryn Duffy, Empire City Casino 914-457-2431, [tduffy@empirecitycasino.com](mailto:tduffy@empirecitycasino.com)

John Cirillo, Cirillo World 914-260-7436, [johnnycigarpr@aol.com](mailto:johnnycigarpr@aol.com)

Frank Drucker, Yonkers Raceway 914-968-4200, [fdrucker@yonkersraceway.com](mailto:fdrucker@yonkersraceway.com)

## Arrival of 7 Europeans & 1 American at JFK Garner International Attention

Worldwide Contenders Will Compete in New York for \$1 Million, Saturday, October 10th

**New York**—An international flight touched down at John F. Kennedy Airport Thursday morning, carrying very special cargo - eight of the world's finest harness horses. The high-performing athletes will compete to win a **\$1 Million** purse in the **International Trot** being held at **Yonkers Raceway** on **Saturday, October 10, 2015**.

A world-class event, the International Trot returns after a 20-year hiatus. Horses and drivers representing Norway, Sweden, Italy, France, Canada and the United States will compete to win the richest purse in the history of the famed Yonkers Raceway.

Originally hosted at Roosevelt Raceway for nearly thirty years, the International Trot was taken over by Yonkers Raceway when Roosevelt permanently closed its doors in 1988. **Yonkers Raceway** president and CEO **Tim Rooney**, a passionate operator, horse breeder and owner, took over as host for harness racing's global classic that year, bringing Roosevelt's **Lew "Tootie" Barasch** aboard to spearhead the effort. Yonkers staged the International for seven years thereafter.

The Rooney Family has owned the famed harness oval since 1972, and Yonkers Raceway was resuscitated with the development of its onsite casino, Empire City, in October, 2006.

Now, through the efforts of Mr. Rooney and Yonkers Raceway's COO **Bob Galterio**, the International Trot will return to Yonkers with a **\$1 million purse** after its 20-year hiatus. It has been buoyed by that same Rooney passion, combined with the emergence of **Empire City Casino** as a preeminent entertainment destination, along with the success of the recently expanded simulcast program that offers Yonkers harness races to more than a dozen countries in Europe through a French wagering hub.

In November 2014, to satiate the feverish European appetite for harness racing product, Yonkers Raceway entered into an agreement to provide France with Sunday races. Wagering throughout Europe, handled through the French wagering hub PMU (Pari Mutuel Urbain), on five of the eight Sunday afternoon cards offered to date, exceeded \$1 million on races from Yonkers.

*"Harness racing is more popular throughout Europe than the thoroughbreds, except in two countries – England and Ireland,"* said **Rooney**.

In Europe, trotters have the same popularity on Sunday afternoons as the NFL does in the U.S.A.

France, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Austria, Luxemburg, Holland, Estonia and Malta have wagered on the simulcasting of next Saturday's International Trot. Italy, Norway and Sweden will also have wagering on the race, which will be scheduled for the fourth race with a **3:10pm post time on October 10th**, with the first race of the day scheduled for 2pm. Most of the races, like the International, are raced at 1 and ¼ miles, an unusual distance in America but extremely popular overseas.

*"It's our pleasure to bring back the International Trot,"* **Rooney** says. *"It's been a signature New York race since it debuted at Roosevelt Raceway back in 1959. We took over the race after Roosevelt closed, and it was very well received."*

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*“With Yonkers now a major player in the overseas simulcast market, we feel this is the best time to showcase our track to the world by again inviting the best trotters in the world to race here.”* **Rooney** continued. *“We have had tremendous cooperation from our horsemen, and all of us are looking forward to it.”*

### Empire City Casino and New York State Education

In the past 8 years, since reopening as a casino, Empire City has generated nearly \$25 million a month for New York State’s schools. Tim Rooney owns and operates Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway in Westchester County.

The famed Yonkers Raceway opened in 1899 as Empire City Race Track. Rooney and his brothers purchased the harness track in 1972 during its heyday when trotters and pacers brought 30,000 fans to the historic track. The track was a hot spot not only for the country’s best racing, with champion thoroughbred racehorse **Seabiscuit** racing there five times in the 1930s, but also scores of celebrity visits, including **Ed Sullivan** who was a regular visitor in the 60s, entertainer **Cab Calloway**, golfing great **Jack Nicklaus**, and President **Jimmy Carter**.

When New York State law allowed racetracks to install video lottery terminals (VLTs), commonly known as slot machines, Rooney invested over \$300 million and transformed the historic track into a Las Vegas-style casino, re-opening it as Empire City Casino in October 2006. Today it attracts over 8 million visitors a year, celebrities **Harry Connick, Jr.** and **Paula Dean** among them.

The property has been lucrative for New York. The state collects nearly 70 percent of Empire City’s net win (funds remaining after payout of prizes) as tax revenue, with 50 percent allocated directly to education. That’s significantly higher than tax rates paid by casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. According to the Nevada Gaming Control Board, Nevada casinos are taxed at a rate of 7.75 percent. New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement indicates that in 2013 the tax rate for its casinos was raised to 15 percent from the previous 8 percent.

In the month of August alone, Empire City generated nearly \$25 million for education, enough to fund the annual education of 1,344 New York students. The amount represents nearly a third of the \$76 million generated for education that month by the nine existing racinos statewide.

Comparatively, the most recent numbers available show Nevada collected approximately \$57 million in the month of July from all of its casinos statewide. In the month of June, New Jersey casinos generated \$16.5 million in tax revenue for the state.

In fiscal year 2014/2015, the state’s education coffers received over \$273 million from Empire City, and since opening its doors as a casino, the single property has generated nearly \$2.4 billion for New York schools to date.

### About Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway:

Empire City Casino, one of the largest entertainment and gaming destinations in the northeast, features 5,300 of the hottest slots, electronic poker, blackjack, craps, roulette, baccarat and sic bo; year-round harness racing & International simulcasting; live entertainment including the best party, tribute and Latin bands, comedy, & more. A plethora of dining options will satisfy even the most discerning palate with Italian cuisine at *Nonno’s Trattoria*; trackside dining with live betting at *Empire Terrace Restaurant*; and convenient delicious options at the International Food Court or *Lil’ Cocina*. A new \$50 million expansion added *Dan Rooney’s*, a high-energy sports bar, and *Alley 810*, a craft cocktail lounge rounds out the entertainment options with retro bowling lanes. Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway is located at 810 Yonkers Avenue (off I-87 at Central Avenue) Yonkers, NY, Westchester County, open seven days a week from 10:00am to 6:00am. Visit [www.empirecitycasino.com](http://www.empirecitycasino.com) or call 914.968.4200 for information.